

ANNA CHESNOKOVA AND WILLIE VAN PEER

# Anyone came to live here some time ago

## A cognitive semiotics approach to deviation as a foregrounding device

**Abstract.** About half a century ago, a little revolution in literary studies took place. Following the ideas of the Russian Formalists and Prague Structuralists, a more rigorous approach to the study of literary texts was proposed. One of the major discussions turned around e.e. cummings<sup>1</sup> “anyone lived in a pretty how town,” especially about the heavy foregrounding in the poem. Initially, the debate was one of conceptualization and the framing of the function of literary analysis, and no effort was made to investigate the effects of the deviations empirically. This is where our research starts.

In this paper we argue that the value of literary techniques lies in the effects they create in readers. Hence we will show the results of an empirical study in reactions to the poem by cummings, which will illuminate the way in which beginning vs. advanced EFL students react to foregrounding devices in the text.

**Keywords:** foregrounding; deviation; semiotics: empirical research on texts; e.e. cummings.

### 1. Introduction: Theoretical Background

#### 1.1. *Text as a semiotic sign*

We will start from the assumption that a literary work of art can be considered to be a semiotic sign. A very complex sign indeed, which demands a lot of processing efforts on the part of its addressees, but a sign nevertheless. Whether we speak of Wordsworth’s *Daffodils*, of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* or of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, readers will be able to say what these “signs” mean to them. They must decode the separate signs and come to a general understanding of the whole. Sure, they will have to explain more than with simple signs such as “No smoking” or “Stop”. But we argue that for most of us, once we have been made acquainted with a text, that very text acquires the characteristics of a semiotic sign. It can even become a “signpost” in one’s life, guiding one through difficult

<sup>1</sup> In the article, we stick to how the poet wished to have his name spelled.

tacks, setting out values and norms to obey and practice, and showing the way to the good life. A consequence of this view is that we should investigate how readers confront such extremely complex signs. There is not much point in investigating the “Stop” sign and its meaning. But in order to interpret complex literary texts, we need to do more. There are intrinsic and extrinsic rules that guide such processes, to which Umberto Eco (1992) has eloquently drawn attention. The extrinsic rules concern the context in which interpretation is required. As an example he refers to seeing a picture in a museum of a naked man and woman, the latter holding an apple in her hand. In this context the apple may be interpreted as the cause of the Fall from Paradise – or even as a general symbol of sin. But if someone insists on interpreting every apple everywhere in this sense, that person may be in trouble soon.

Intrinsic rules are often denied by present-day scholars of a post-modern stance, but Eco has always insisted that they do operate in our reading of literature. And has listed good reasons why this is fundamentally so. (Of course we ourselves subscribe to Eco’s point of view.) In his essay “On Style”, for instance, he points out that “a semiotics of the arts is nothing other than searching for and laying bare the workings of style”. His characterization of the present situation applies perfectly to our own position, which is why we prefer to quote him in full:

Everyone remembers how much light has been shed on texts [...] by certain pronouncement of the Russian Formalists, by Jakobson, by narratologists and analysts of poetic discourse. But we really are living in obscure times, at least in Italy, where one hears with increasing frequency polemical voices accusing semiotic studies (which they sometimes also call, with pejorative connotation, formalist or structuralist studies) of being guilty of a decline in criticism, of being pseudo-mathematical discourses, full of illegible diagrams (Eco 2005: 164).

Ironically, he remarks in another essay in the same volume (“On Some Functions of Literature”): “The world of literature is a universe in which it is possible to establish whether a reader has a sense of reality or is the victim of his own hallucinations” (Eco 2005: 7).

Fortunately, there is a branch of literary studies that has developed, over the past decades, methods to investigate such processes of interpreting such complex signs. As such, our investigation could be categorized under the label of cognitive semiotics, involving experimental research. The origins of this approach go back to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, but the full consequences of the approach emerged only about half a century ago, when a little revolution took place in the study of literature. Following the introduction of the ideas of the Russian Formalists and the Prague Structuralists in the West during the late 1960s, a more rigorous approach to the study of literary texts was proposed, initially against fierce resistance from literary

criticism. Thus, stylistics started, with Geoffrey Leech and Roger Fowler as the major protagonists of the new approach, vying for attention and prestige against the more traditional literary criticisms.

One of the major discussions of the time turned around the poem “anyone lived in a pretty how town” by e.e. cummings, especially about the heavy foregrounding that may be observed in the text. While traditional literary criticism seemed unable to handle the extreme degrees of deviations from syntax and punctuation, the new paradigm, based on then newer linguistic models, claimed to provide insight into the poet’s technique and intention, but at the same time to gain a grasp of the effects generated by this technique in readers’ processing of the poem.

Initially, the debate was very much one of conceptualization and the framing of the function of literary analysis, in which arguments on both sides remained rather “philosophical”. No effort was made at the time to investigate the effects of the deviations empirically. This is where our research starts.

In this paper we argue that the value of literary techniques lies in the semiotic effects they create in readers. However, this asks for a special methodology. Most of the time semiotic analyses remain in the realm of projections of the analyst. Therefore they are by their very nature subjective and hence tend to be speculative. There may certainly be value in this approach. But as a means to develop insight in the real semiotic processes of understanding such complex signs it will not do. What is needed are data that are collected objectively and independently (meaning they can be inspected by anyone) and subsequently compared to a concrete hypothesis. Such a controllable and replicable methodology does exist, and in this article we wish to plead for a broader application of it in the realm of semiotics. The empirical methods to be employed in this respect have been outlined in detail in van Peer, Hakemulder and Zyngier (2012) – and in Chesnokova (2011). We wish to refer the reader to these works for further elucidation.

Basically the method involves the formulation of testable hypotheses, from which concrete predictions (about interpretations, attitudes or behaviour) of readers are derived. Subsequently, data are collected in such a way that they can corroborate or refute these predictions. A statistical analysis of the data leads to probabilities with which either corroboration or refutation are associated. As a rule of thumb, confirmation of hypotheses must have a statistical confidence level of at least 95 % (the so-called significance level of  $p < .05$ ). If that level of certainty is not shown by the statistics, the hypothesis is rejected. The history of this method shows that in most cases things are less clear than was thought of in theory – and the data reveal aspects of reality that had not been conceptualized before. This is what we will do in the present article. We will subject certain expectations about the reading process to such an empirical investigation. The results

are certainly surprising, and could not have been revealed through arm-chair speculation.

Hence we will show the results of an empirical study in reactions to the poem by e.e. cummings, both in its original form and in a manipulated version – from which virtually all syntactic deviations have been removed. Participants in the reading experiment were beginning vs. advanced students of English (as a foreign language). They reacted to a battery of scaled questions to particular locations in the text, as well as to the text as a whole.

### 1.2. *Theory of foregrounding*

As a first step in such an empirical study one needs semiotic material and reactions to it. For reasons mentioned above we chose the poem “anyone lived in a pretty how town” by e.e. cummings. The poem contains a heavy dose of what is called *foregrounding* in literary theory, at least in the English speaking world. The term is a translation of the Czech word *aktualisace* developed in the works of the Prague Structuralists (Mukarovský 1964). It is itself a later development of the term *ostranenie* first proposed in the famous essay “Art as Technique” by Victor Shklovsky (1917). In this essay Shklovsky asks the basic question why there is such a thing as art in the first place. The answer he gives is to be understood as a semiotic theory of art and literature. Its function lies in *defamiliarization*: making the forms strange or difficult so that the reader / spectator has the feeling of seeing things for the first time. Art exists, Shklovsky holds,

that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects “un-familiar,” to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged (Shklovsky 1965: 12).

A useful definition of foregrounding is provided by Simpson (2014: 52) who defines it as

a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes [...] foregrounding typically involves a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism.

Hence there are two forms of foregrounding: parallelism and deviation. The poem by e.e. cummings (to be found in Appendix A to this article) contains abundant foregrounding of both forms. It opens with a heavy

form of deviation: “anyone lived in a pretty how town”. The penultimate word here should have been an adjective, but “how” is not an adjective at all, hence causing defamiliarization. Readers will find this a strange sentence – and will therefore have to reflect on its meaning. At the same time, this first line, ending in “town” rhymes with the final word, “down” of the second line, thus displaying a clear instance of parallelism. The poem is literally full with such forms of deviation and parallelism – and thus presents the reader with an extremely complex semiotic whole. (As a matter of fact, such extreme use of foregrounding was a trade mark of e.e. cummings, which is why his works attracted so much attention in the initial phases of the introduction of Formalist and Structuralist views in the West.)

At this point it should be mentioned that already a good deal of empirical work on foregrounding has been done over the past decades. Van Peer sums up the situation as follows:

The first attempt to validate the theory’s claim (van Peer 1986) could only present results of research carried out with a very limited number of 153 participants. The validity of a theory naturally depends on the number of times it has been tested and the number of participants in such tests. Since then, the number of studies has grown to over 10, so that today the theory’s claims have been tested with well over 2000 readers, not a really low number any more, certainly not in the humanities. More important than the mere numbers is the fact that in general these tests have confirmed the predictions derived from the theory. Certainly, 2000 participants is still a rather low number compared to studies in medicine or sociology, but it is not trivial, and certainly presents a highly unusual situation in the humanities. As far as I know, no other theory of literature has ever been put to the test on such an extensive scale (van Peer 2007: 99).

Although foregrounding has been in the focus of literary studies for over half a century, there are certain problems with the work that has been done. So far, for instance:

1. deviation and parallelism have been largely treated together as two inseparable facets. The research by Menninghaus (2014) that focuses on how parallelism alone in poems influences aesthetic and emotional response dimensions of being moved is rather an exception;
2. past research has used native speakers of English as informants – we do not know how foregrounding is perceived and reacted to if texts were read in a foreign language;
3. there has been no research on how similarly or differently EFL novices and trained readers react to textual foregrounding;
4. past research involves a limited number of response possibilities, and without laying the groundwork for a categorization of psychological dimensions;

5. the foregrounded texts have been treated as a whole, with little attention given to time effects.

We strongly believe that these five problems are important for the development of foregrounding theory, so the present research tried to somewhat remedy the situation.

With these observations in mind, we decided to conduct a new reading experiment in which we addressed the problems pointed before.

1. We used a poem from which we removed all obvious deviation and left parallelism intact.

2. Non-native speakers acted as participants in the experiment.

3. We conducted the experiment with both a group of beginning and a group of advanced students, as well as staff members.

4. We offered the respondents a greatly enhanced battery of 30 response items, belonging to 6 “dimensions” (extending van Peer, Hakemulder and Zyngier 2007: 197-213).

5. We identified three separate locations in the text for readers to react to: beginning, middle and end.

In this way we hoped to further develop our insight in how complex semiotic signs are processed.

## 2. Design of the Experiment

### 2.1. *Materials*

For the experiment, the poem “anyone lived in a pretty how town” by e.e. cummings (1940) that had actually triggered the interest of stylisticians to unusual textual patterns some 45 years ago was chosen.

The poem is nine-stanzas long and is exceptionally rich in all kinds of deviations: syntactic, stylistic, grammatical, etc. In the present study we concentrate on the deviational aspect. That means that we left all parallelism intact, but constructed a manipulated version of the poem from which virtually all deviations had been removed. The text was then proofread by a native speaker of English to make sure it sounded grammatically and lexically correct. (For the full texts of both original and manipulated poems, see Appendices A and B.) In order to ensure that the data collected would indeed be independent, respondents were not aware of the existence of the two versions.

## 2.2. *Participants*

The reported research was carried out in February 2014. Participants were 88 members of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University in Ukraine. The respondents belonged to three levels of EFL competence: 35 were beginning students majoring in the English Philology, 40 were advanced students of the same department, and 13 staff members were also involved. The latter two groups have been later conflated into an “advanced” group in a number of analyses. Since each of these groups will be divided in two (one group reading the original, the other reading the manipulated version of the poem), we realize that the number of participants is therefore a bit low and ideally should be 30 per cell. In later studies, though, we will expand the sample by replicating the research with other groups of the same university.

Participants’ profile was rather typical of Ukrainian Humanities departments. Only 3.4% were male and as many as 96.6%, female. The mean age of the sample was 19.5. To heighten the validity of readers’ responses, the questionnaires had been translated into Ukrainian while the poem itself was presented in English. We decided to give respondents no indication of the author, as we thought the prestige of a canonical poet could affect the response: the participants could have rated the verse in a socially-desired way simply guided by the assumption that whatever is produced by a famous author is supposed to be rated as beautiful (as demonstrated by van Peer and Fuchs 2007).

## 2.3. *Design*

Hence, the participants in the reading experiment read either the original poem by e.e. cummings or the manipulated version, and were requested to give us their reactions in the specifically designed questionnaires (see Figure 1), reporting their response to the verse. In the main part of the questionnaire, participants evaluated their response on a battery of Likert scales at three locations in the text: beginning, middle and end. Likert scales have the advantage that they can be filled out very rapidly, also by untrained informants, and have been shown to be a reliable instrument for the collection of data of the kind we were interested in. Additionally, readers were asked to indicate their gender and age.

At the very beginning of the experiment, participants were presented with the following short introduction:

Dear reader,

Below you will find the first verse line of a poem. Please read it attentively, and then circle the number that corresponds best to your opinion. This is not a matter



of right or wrong, but solely how *you* feel about it. That is the only thing we are interested in. There are NO right or wrong answers, as your genuine reactions are what is important to us.

Please consider the order of the answers: the number 1 means that you do NOT feel that the statement applies, the number 7 indicating your absolute agreement. Thus, for instance, if the question is asked whether you find a particular line “beautiful”, you circle **1** if you think it is not beautiful at all, the number **7** if you think it is absolutely beautiful. With all positions in between, of course.

Now read the opening line from the poem:

*anyone lived in a pretty bow town*

**I feel that this line:**

is musical:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
has a deep meaning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
makes me more sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Figure 1. Questionnaire sample. Original version.

2.4. *Procedures*

The questionnaires were randomly distributed, and participants were invited to react to the poem at three different moments: after line 1, after the 6<sup>th</sup> stanza (approximately in the middle of the text) and after the whole poem. In each case, respondents gave their reaction on 30 Likert scales (containing 7 points), so each reader gave us their reactions on 90 scales. All in all we collected about 8,000 reactions.

The psychological dimensions we wanted to be informed of were based on categories previously developed by van Peer, Hakemulder and Zyngier (2007: 197-213). In the present research the original 15 scales have been extended by adding three more scales per category. These categories are more intuitive than anything else: they have not been calibrated nor validated. It seems intuitively clear, however, that reactions to a text would contain cognitive, emotive, attitudinal, social and aesthetic dimensions. This resulted in the following list:

1. Aesthetic appreciation
  - I think this line is musical.
  - I think the sentence is beautiful
  - I found it striking
  - I would like to read it again
  - I find it so good that I feel like memorizing it
1. Aesthetic structure
  - The sentence does not have a practical application



- The line is complex
  - The sentence is elaborate
  - The wording is unique
  - This is written in a very special style
2. Cognitive
    - It makes me stop and think
    - It could make a change to my life
    - I am learning something from it
    - The line has a deep meaning
    - It opens up new perspectives
  3. Emotive
    - I find this line moving
    - I am touched by it
    - It makes me shiver
    - Such wording gets under my skin
    - Reading this gives me gooseflesh
  4. Social context
    - This is the sort of sentence by means of which people would write about their deepest concerns
    - This comes probably from an anthology
    - This is the sort of sentence discussed in a literature class
    - Maybe such language may change something in people
    - I would like to see such utterances more in my daily environment
  5. Attitudinal
    - The sentence makes me more sensitive
    - I think it introduces a new attitude
    - It makes me look at things differently
    - The line diminishes the distance to other people
    - My point of view is questioned by these words

The questionnaires completed by the respondents were collected, and the data obtained were processed with the help of the computer program SPSS (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*) in line with the standards of using statistical procedures in the Humanities (Chesnokova 2011; van Peer et al. 2012).

The research was conducted in a conventional academic setting during lectures. We distributed the (printed) poems, without participants realizing that there were two versions of the text. After having read the text and filled out the questionnaire at the appropriated text locations and the questionnaires had been collected, the respondents were requested to share with the class their personal reactions in a group discussion, led by one of the experimenters. The original version was mainly described as “challenging”, “artificial” and “not grammatically correct” – an indication

that readers had indeed taken up the strongly deviational character of the original text. The respondents mentioned “strange capitals” and noted that it was “about deciphering the text,” though “people are attracted by mystery” and “poetry should impress”.

Alternatively, the manipulated text was found “traditional” and “easier” than the original one. Participants mentioned that it was “easier for brain”; that they “did not have to work hard”, and it was “easier to understand who is who” in the text. Additionally they found “more logic” in the manipulated poem and even thought that it “could be learned by heart”.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. *Data analysis*

To start the analysis, we had to make sure that the 5 items in each of the 6 dimensions indeed measured the same thing. For this purpose, a reliability analysis was carried out. It showed that the two conditions for constructing new variables out of the individual scales were fulfilled. Cronbach’s alpha was above .80 in all cases (according to the standards of statistical analysis, this value should be above .65 in order for the scales to be conflated), demonstrating that the individual items could indeed be conflated into 6 dimensions. Next, all item-total correlations must be above .30, which was also the case (except for the item “non-practical”). Thus, new variables were computed for each of the 6 categories.

Furthermore, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied, and it demonstrated that the data were normally distributed, hence parametric tests were allowed. This was done through significance testing, using both T-tests and ANOVA’s. These are statistical procedures (carried out by the SPSS computer program) that compare both differences in means and differences in distribution around means for the different groups of readers

The data were analysed both *between subjects* (for the difference in reaction to the original and manipulated versions of the poem, and for the differences between the groups of readers), using a T-test and ANOVA for independent samples, as well as *within subjects* (for the difference between reactions to the three locations within the poems), using the Wilcoxon test. The level of significance was set at 5 %, i.e. *p*-values lower than .05. So-called *p*-values vary between 0 and 1, and indicate the *error probability* for the observed group differences. In other words: if the error probability of the statistical tests rises above 5 %, the group differences are considered as non-significant, meaning that they could very well have been caused by error, or chance.

### 3.2. Major findings

Differences in responses to the original and the manipulated version of the poem were calculated for each of the 6 dimensions (which each conflated the 5 scaled questions representing the dimension) by means of a T-test for independent samples. Surprisingly only one difference turned out to be statistically significant: that for Aesthetic Structure ( $t = 3.16$ ,  $df = 75$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Please refer to the individual scales for this dimension outlined above. (The question about the text being “non-practical” had not been included, since the item-total correlation for this question dropped markedly below the cut-off point of .30.) No other categories yielded significant results in responses to the two versions. So our readers did mark significant differences in terms of aesthetic structures between the two versions, but none other, which is really surprising, given the vast differences between original text and the manipulated version.

Overall differences (in a MANOVA test) between the 6 dimensions for the different *versions* yielded a highly significant result ( $p = .002$ ), but with only the individual dimensions Aesthetic Structure ( $p = .001$ ) and Emotive ( $p = .035$ ) yielding significant results (see Table 1 and Graph 1).

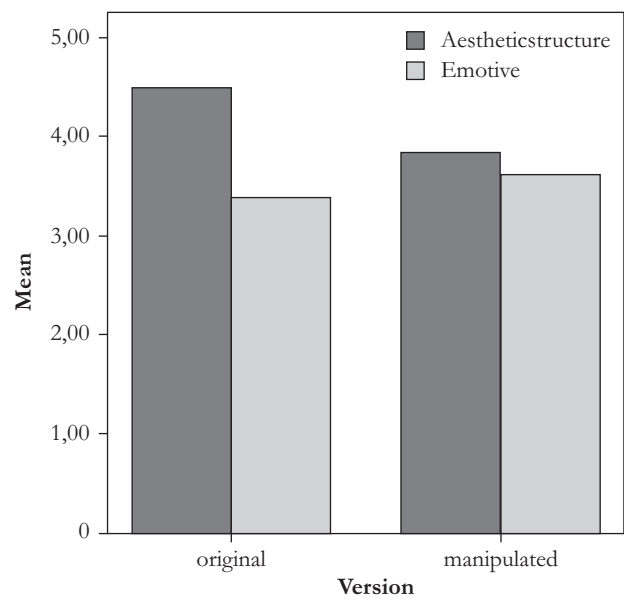
Table 1. *Significant results between two versions: dimensions Aesthetic Structure and Emotive*

	Aesthetic Structure	Aesthetic Structure	Emotive	Emotive
	Beginners	Advanced	Beginners	Advanced
Original	3.8	4.5	1.0	3.3
Manipulated	2.9	3.8	2.7	3.7

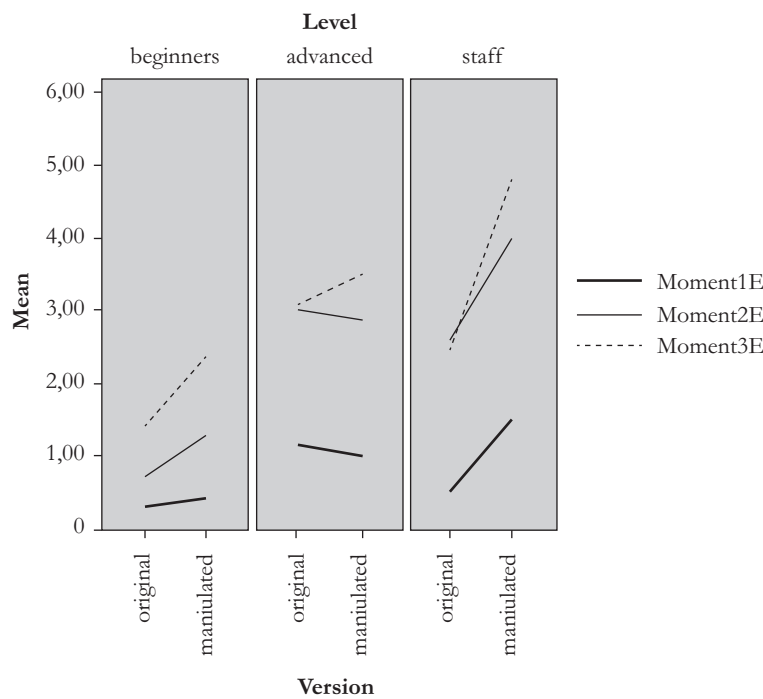
The table should be read as follows: the original was given a higher average score on Aesthetic Structure, both by beginners (3.8 for the original vs. 2.9 for the manipulated version) and by advanced students (4.5 for the original and 3.8 for the manipulated version). That difference is highly significant:  $p = .001$ , meaning that if we would repeat this experiment with other – comparable – students a thousand times, the results would be different in only one case! But now look at the right hand columns of the table. Here it turns out that the perceived emotive effect of the poem was larger for the manipulated version! The following graph illustrates both differences.

In other words, the manipulated version was generally felt *more* emotive than the original by beginners and staff. The difference is small, though (see the bar chart): the *effect size* is negligible, though statistically significant (at  $p = .035$ ).

The differences between the *levels* (beginners, advanced and staff) are highly significant for all dimensions:  $p = .003$ . This becomes clear in the Graph 2.



Graph 1. Differences between two versions: dimensions Aesthetic Structure and Emotive.



Graph 2. Reactions of three level groups to three moments in the poem.

The left-hand graph contains the results for beginning students, the middle one the advanced students, and the right-hand one the staff. The line represents average responses for the three text locations, with the values allocated for the original on the left, and for the manipulated version on the right hand. Even a cursory glance at the three graphs reveals striking differences. The beginners generally favoured the manipulated version somewhat higher than the original. With the advanced students, the opposite was the case: at two text locations were they (somewhat) more positive for the original poem. Hence of the three groups the advanced students behaved most in accordance with predictions from the theory of foregrounding. The most striking result, however, is with the staff: they rated the manipulated versions *considerably* higher for all three text locations. We are at a loss as how to explain this.

If one looks at the separate dimensions, the only differences in the predicted direction were in the group of advanced students for (again) Aesthetic Structure between original (with an average of 4.41 on the 7-point scale) and manipulated (average 3.82) with  $p = .027$  and for the Cognitive dimension, with the original obtaining 4.7 vs. the manipulated text 4.0, with a  $p$ -value of .050.

It also emerges that most significant differences occur after the first text location, both for the differences between the versions and between the students' levels. As Table 2 below illustrates, the number of significant differences diminishes after the second and third text location. This result is difficult to explain. Maybe we are dealing with a primacy effect: the effects wear off after the first exposure?

Differences in response to the original and manipulated versions were tested by means of a one-way ANOVA, which resulted in again no significant differences, except in the case of Aesthetic Structure. Here the differences were as follows:

- at the 1<sup>st</sup> measurement:  $t = 3.17$ ,  $df = 82$ ,  $p = .002$ . (original: 3.48, manipulated: 2.63)
- at the 2<sup>nd</sup> measurement:  $t = 2.09$ ,  $df = 79$ ,  $p = .040$ . (original: 4.78, manipulated: 4.14)
- at the 3<sup>rd</sup> measurement:  $t = 1.54$ ,  $df = 85$ ,  $p = .126$ . (original: 4.62, manipulated: 4.16).

The previous table made quite clear that the number of significant differences between the original and the manipulated versions decreased spectacularly after the reactions to line 1. These differences are highly significant (measured non-parametrically). Yet strikingly there is no decrease in the significant differences between beginners and advanced readers, and this needs more research and explanation.

Table 2. *The three measurement moments*

	Moment 1		Moment 2		Moment 3	
	Version	Level	Version	Level	Version	Level
Aesthetic	.049	.002		.001		.002
Appreciation						
Aesthetic	.014	.048	.033	.005		.005
Structure						
Cognitive	.000	.004		.000 (!)		.002
Emotive				.002		.046
Attitudinal	.043	.003		.001	.032	.031
Social Context		.002				.043

#### 4. Conclusions and discussion

Our research has shown that deviation as a foregrounding device by itself has particular effects: when it was removed, readers' responses turned out to be different in a number of cases. This is in line with general foregrounding theory and with the insights developed by Shklovsky. We also uncovered differences between the reactions of novices and trained readers. In general, the latter are much more susceptible to the change of deviation while beginners are typically very hesitant. Moreover, novices reacted generally less favourably to the original deviations. And so (surprisingly!) did staff members, who produced a highly favourable reaction to the *removal* of the deviations!

Additionally, we have greatly increased the number of response possibilities along 6 coherent dimensions. However, reactions to some items were often not only negating our predictions, but were actually *against* our predictions, and statistically significant at that! As this is the first time predictions by foregrounding theory are not borne out, we need more research to offer explanation to the assertion based on empirical evidence collected from read readers. A possible reason could be a population characteristic, so more intercultural studies are needed to cast light on how cultures may interfere in literature reading. Also, as pointed out before, our sample was rather small, which may have prevented reaching significance in the statistical tests. We will therefore collect considerably more reactions from other students at the same institution and conflate them with the current data. For further research, the experiment could also be replicated with a different population sample, and results could be compared to those of native speakers.

Another very striking finding was the sheer drop in effects caused by the removal of the deviations after the first line, which could be explained by a primacy effect or by the fact that readers got used very rapidly to the task they were set, and their concentration dipped. Yet as other research on foregrounding did not find such an effect, the findings need more empirical verification.

From a more general perspective, the results reported above give us some indication that the traditional and recent views on foregrounding may need certain revision. That, also, is in the nature of a cognitive semiotic approach to art and literature.

**Anna Chesnokova**

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University  
Ukraine  
chesnokova@voliacable.com

**Willie van Peer**

University of Munich  
Germany  
w.vanpeer@gmail.com

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### Appendix A. e.e. cummings’ Poem: Original

anyone lived in a pretty how town  
 (with up so floating many bells down)  
 spring summer autumn winter  
 he sang his didn’t he danced his did

Women and men (both little and small)  
 cared for anyone not at all  
 they sowed their isn’t they reaped their same  
 sun moon stars rain

children guessed (but only a few  
 and down they forgot as up they grew  
 autumn winter spring summer)  
 that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf  
 she laughed his joy she cried his grief  
 bird by snow and stir by still  
 anyone’s any was all to her

someones married their everyones  
 laughed their cryings and did their dance  
 (sleep wake hope and then) they  
 said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon  
 (and only the snow can begin to explain  
 how children are apt to forget to remember  
 with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess  
 (and noone stooped to kiss his face)  
 busy folk buried them side by side  
 little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep  
 and more by more they dream their sleep  
 noone and anyone earth by april  
 wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men (both dong and ding)  
 summer autumn winter spring  
 reaped their sowing and went their came  
 sun moon stars rain

### **Appendix B. e.e. cummings' Poem: Manipulated**

Someone lived in a pretty old town.  
 (With up so many bells ringing down)  
 Spring, summer, autumn, winter.  
 He sang his song, he danced his dance.

Women and men (both large and small)  
 Cared for Someone not at all.  
 They sowed their interest, they reaped their gain,  
 Sun, moon, stars, rain.

Children guessed (but only a few  
 And then they forgot as older they grew  
 Autumn, winter, spring, summer)  
 That No-one loved him more and more.

When by now the trees lost leaf,  
 She laughed for his joy, she cried for his grief.  
 Bird in snow and stir till still,  
 Someone's something was all to her.

Someones married their Everyones,  
 Laughed at their sorrows and did their dance,  
 Sleep, wake, hope, and then they  
 Said their prayers, they dreamed their dreams.

Stars, rain, sun, moon,  
 (And only the snow can begin to explain  
 How children are apt to forget to remember  
 With up so many bells ringing down)

One day Someone died, I guess  
 (And No-one stooped to kiss his face).

Busy folks buried them side by side,  
Little by little and grave by grave.

All by all and deep by deep,  
And more and more they dream their dreams –  
No-one and Someone, in the earth by April  
Wish their spirit and sniff in stress.

Women and men (both long and lean)  
Summer, autumn, winter, spring  
Reaped their sowing and went their way  
Sun, moon, stars, rain.